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[REDACTED]

november 23, 1987

PERSIAN GULF: Situation Report

Iranian Ship Attacks

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

Iran attacked two Greek ships in the Persian Gulf over the weekend, boarding one and taking it to Bandar-e Bushehr, according to special intelligence and press reports. The captured cargo ship, taken near Farsi Island, was noted after the attack to be flying the Iranian flag;

[REDACTED]

Iran probably increased its ship attacks in response to several Iraqi attacks on Iranian tankers and tugs during the past week. The capture of a ship near Farsi Island was unusual and may reflect Iranian concern over any ship coming close to the naval base there, particularly if practicing possibly deceptive actions.

Other Gulf Activities

More Iranian mines were found and destroyed near Farsi by the US Navy late last week. Marine growth on one mine indicated it had been there at least a month.

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Despite clashes with US forces in September and early last month, Iran apparently continued to lay mines in the Gulf at least through the middle of last month and possibly later. Tehran probably has not given up the use of mines but is being more careful to avoid detection.

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**Increasing Danger
to US-Associated
Shipping**

In a notable change to previous patterns of Iranian ship attacks, Iran appears to be focusing increasingly on US-associated shipping. Three of the seven tankers attacked by Iran this month and four of the 10 struck since mid-October have been US-owned ships. Before the Iranian Silkworm attacks on two US-associated tankers off Kuwait last month, only five US-owned tankers had been attacked by Iran or had struck Iranian mines this year. Iranian media have emphasized the US association of these ships, once they have been attacked, as evidence of US weakness in the Gulf. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Iran is likely to continue to target US-associated shipping not under escort. Iranian intelligence probably is capable of locating such ships, and Iranian naval forces probably would have little difficulty in identifying them for attack purposes. Tehran appears to believe such attacks do not risk US retaliation while helping it to spread claims that US naval units are ineffective and should be removed from the region. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] DIA believes that Iran has possibly stepped up its ship attack operations in response to several Iraqi attacks on Iranian tankers and tugboats in the past week. While Iran has not given up using mines, the assertion that Iran has continued to lay mines possibly into this month is not supported by the available evidence. For the purposes of comparison, ship attacks, mine strikes, and Silkworm strikes should not be lumped together. Therefore, DIA believes that, in an apparent change to previous patterns of Iranian ship attacks, Iran may be increasingly targeting US-owned shipping. [REDACTED]